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ABSTRACT

Three questions in the application of native-language sociolinguistic theories to second language contexts are addressed: (1) Is transfer always a psycholinguistic process of interlingual overgeneralization? (2) Does attention to speech underlie all style shifting? (3) Is H. Giles' Speech Accommodation Theory adequate to explain all purposeful style shifting? From examination and comparison of the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of interlanguage and interference, of Labov's definition of style shifting, and of the limitations of the Speech Accommodation Theory, it is concluded that neither Labov's nor Giles' model adequately describes or explains the variation in interlanguage. The findings indicate that, while the insights of native-language theories have increased the understanding of second language learning, they have not provided all the answers. (MSE)

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APPLYING L_1 THEORIES TO L_2 DATA:

HOW FAR CAN WE GO?

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(Paper presented at the TESOL Convention in Toronto, March 1983)

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In this paper, I am attempting to deal with three issues in the application of L_1 sociolinguistic theories to L_2 contexts. I use the term "sociolinguistic" here to mean both "sociolinguistic" and "social psychological."

(1) The first issue is: Is transfer always a psycholinguistic process of interlingual overgeneralization?

Selinker (1972) posits five central psycholinguistic processes as the causes of error. The first one is language transfer. Other researchers have concurred in treating transfer as a psycholinguistic process. Adiv (1981) and Chimombo (1981) support the notion that transfer and overgeneralization are essentially derived from one psycholinguistic process. They both call transfer "interlingual overgeneralization," and overgeneralization "intralingual overgeneralization." Beebe (in numerous, thank God undocumented, lectures that she intends to deny) has said the same. In fact, this terminology is now quite common, reflecting the view that transfer is a psycholinguistic process which constitutes one type of overgeneralization.

I'd like to argue here that transfer may sometimes be a psycholinguistic overgeneraiization from the native language to the target language, but it is not always such. Interference is often a sociolinguistic process of cultural identity assertion. And in these cases, it fulfills the purposeful social psychological functions that all speech shifts do. It is not an error or mistake, in the sense of an overgeneralization, becasuse it does not result from a learner's misguided belief that a feature from L_1 belongs in L_2. Rather, the interfering item is there for a purpose.

My favorite example of interference which fulfills a social psychological purpose is that of Buwei Chao, a doctor, a cook and the author of an amusing cookbook, How to Cook and Eat in Chinese. Mrs. Chao wrote her cookbook in

Chinese English. Despite her daughter's and her husband's counseling on the correct use of the English language, Buwei Chao maintained her Chinese English throughout several editions, using recipe titles like "Snow Peas Stir Chicken Slices" and "Shrimp Cakes Meet Tiger Lilies." It's clear that the Chao family has a high level of linguistic sophistication. Y. R. Chao, the well-known dialectologist who is Buwei Chao's husband, teases his wife and the readers in footnotes throughout the book. Mrs. Chao writes that despite people's requests for esoteric dishes like monkey's brain and honeyed mice, she wants to limit her book to dishes for the average American housewife: "nothing fancy . . . things for folks like you and me" (p. v). In response, her husband adds a footnote: "You mean 'folks as you and I'" (p.v). Anyone who can joke about the linguistic hypercorrection of just plain folks and who has the confidence to let shrimp cakes meet tiger lilies deserves some sociolinguistic credit. Bu Wei Chao's book demonstrated knowledge of English, while clearly asserting deep loyalty to the Chinese way of doing things. Most significantly, her book demonstrates that transfer can be a conscious sociolinguistic choice, not an unwitting psycholinguistic overgeneralization. Buwei Chao intentionally changed Standard English into Chinese English so we could learn to cook and eat "in" Chinese.

We can classify different types of transfer. First, I propose that we distinguish between <u>psycholinguistically motivated</u> and <u>sociolinguistically motivated</u> transfer (although these two may overlap). Psycholinguistic interlingual overgeneralization is based on lack of knowledge, misunderstanding, or an incorrect hypothesis. It is part of the basic creative construction process. On the other hand, sociolinguistic transfer (whether conscious or unconscious) does not stem from a lack of knowledge or an incorrect hypothesis. Rather, it seems to emanate, in the cases I know of, from a clear (though perhaps tacit)

understanding of social norms and a desire to achieve some social psychological purpose or sociolinguistic function. I propose that we recognize at least two basic types of sociolinguistically-based transfer and use distinct terminology for them: sociolinguistic rule transfer and socially-motivated transfer.

Sociolinguistic rule transfer (e.g., Schmidt, 1977; Beebe, 1980a; Olshtain, 1983) involves transfer of an L_1 sociolinguistic rule into L_2. That is, speakers transfer a sociolinguistic variable into the second language following the L_1 sociolinguistic pattern. As an example, Thais transfer the socially conditioned formal trilled Thai [r̃] into formal English speech (Beebe, 1980).

Socially-motivated transfer is the second type of sociolinguistically motivated transfer and is distinct from sociolinguistic rule transfer. It involves transfer from L_1 into L_2 that is intended to achieve a social psychological purpose. There may be numerous functions or purposes of transfer, but four purposes of L_1 sociolinguistic variation in general, cited in Beebe and Giles (1984), provide a good range. These purposes are: (1) accommodation; (2) conforming to norms; (3) negotiation; and (4) self-expression.

Accommodation

Accommodation is the term Howard Giles, a British social psychologist, applies to adjustments or modifications which make one's speech become either more similar or less similar to that of the listener (e.g., Giles & Smith, 1979; Beebe & Giles, 1984; Giles & Powesland, 1975). When one's speech is adjusted to become more like that of the listener, it is called convergence. As an example of this, Thais sometimes use English pronouns (pronounced /aay/ and /yuu/) in their speech and use American /r/ when speaking to Americans. When

someone shifts away from the listener, it is called divergence. We might say that Buwei Chao diverged intentionally from her English-speaking audience.

Second language speakers can assert their ethnic distinctiveness and diverge linguistically by increasing their level of native language interference. Likewise, they can express their feelings of solidarity with their native-speaking listener and converge by lowering their level of native language interference. In a study I did on ethnic Chinese Thais in Thailand, the subjects, who were bilingual in Chinese, their native language, and Thai, their second language, would converge in Thai toward an ethnic Thai listener by lowering their interference level--that is, by decreasing their Chinese accent (Beebe, 1977a; Beebe, 1977b; Beebe, 1981). They would use fewer short vowels for long ones, fewer incorrect final consonants, and in general make their Thai sound more Thai (e.g., Beebe & Zuengler, 1983). With a Chinese listener, their rates of interference shot up. We might suggest this is because they had heightened feelings of ethnic Chinese identity in the presence of a Chinese.

Though convergence is perhaps the norm in conversation where listeners want a smooth exchange, divergence occurs frequently when a speaker feels ethnically distinct and wants to assert that distinctive identity. Buwei Chao did that in her cookbook. Gatbonton (1976) found that French Canadians who had strong feelings of ethnic distinctiveness sounded more French in their pronunciations of /θ/ as in 'think' or / / as in 'then.' In short, speakers may converge or diverge to express their cultural identity or their personal feelings.

But it is also possible for speakers to diverge from their interlocutor while intending to converge. Known as psychological convergence (e.g., Beebe, 1981; Thakerer, Giles & Cheshire, 1982), this involves convergence toward a stereotype or expected norm. You have probably heard the famous joke

about the Englishman who sat next to a Singaporean Chinese at a large banquet. The Englishman searched for a conversation topic to break the silence and asked, "likee soupee?" It turned out that the Singaporean was the keynote speaker and spoke beautiful standard RP English. When he came back to his table, he turned to the Englishman and asked, "likee speechee?" Clearly, the Englishman had converged toward an expected norm, not an actual one. In general, the modifications of foreigner talk seem to represent psychological convergence.

Normative Use

Now let me go on to a second social psychological purpose of interference: expressing situational or sociocultural norms. Both first and second language speakers vary what they say and how they say it according to social norms they value. Once acquired, these norms are hard to give up. Let's first look at examples of what non-native speakers choose to say, rather than how they say it.

One of my favorite examples occurred when I was in graduate school at the University of Michigan. A Japanese friend invited me to go to the Student Union for coffee. She started telling me that she was going home to Japan for a visit, then that she was going to go with an American man we both knew, then that she thought her parents would like him, then that he was not a typical American male, then that he understood the Japanese mentality and way of life. After listening attentively for what seemed like a very long time, I said, "Michiko, are you trying to tell me that you are getting married?" With an exasperated glare, she exclaimed, "Yes!" I realized I had been crass. I did not allow her to follow the Japanese sociolinguistic norm of avoiding a blunt statement and using an artful array of sentences that imply the point.

In addition to positing the general category, "sociolinguistic transfer," I would like to propose that there is a category of "sociolinguistic avoidance" [illegible]ushi Sekiya (personal communication) reported a good example of this from Japanese. Two friends of his (one American, one Japanese) were teaching ESL in Tokyo at a junior high school. Both reported that their students refused to call them by name. One student strategy was to practice "sociolinguistic transfer" and say "Would the teacher like us to hand in our papers now?" The other was to practice what I am calling "sociolinguistic avoidance." Students are not supposed to say "you" to teachers in Japan. Therefore, if they didn't want to us the word "teacher" incorrectly, they said nothing or said something that did not require a pronoun at all, such as "Is it time to hand in our papers now?" In other words, they avoided the problem.

Sociolinguistic norms can be so strong that students will simply refuse to learn a form. Another example of sociolinguistic avoidance was given to me by a high school Spanish teacher in New York who reported (personal communication) that some of her American students refuse to use the double negative in Spanish. They argue tht it is "unnecessary" or "silly." Basically, they are conforming to a strong norm in English. It's a socially motivated interference error.

Negotiation

A third social psychological purpose for interference is negotiation. Negotiation means managing or negotiating identity via linguistic choices. The most obvious examples of this involve total language switches. Carol Scotton writes about the situation in Kenya where Swahili is the language of national solidarity, local languages reflect ethnic ingroup solidarity, and English reflects education and Westernization. The choice of language to initiate

a conversation negotiates one's status and identity.

People may increase or decrease native language interference to negotiate identity in a second language. Giles and Powesland (1975) note that a Scottish accent is a boon to doctors in England, whereas a Pakistani one is not. They point out that psychiatrists may cultivate an Austrian accent in English rather than try to stamp it out.

Self-Expression

The fourth social psychological purpose of speech variation is self-expression. I am using "self-expression" as a cover term. It encompasses expression of individual feelings, revelation of personality, artistic expression, and presentation of oneself in a positive light. Let me give some examples.

That guide to machismo, known as Real Men Don't Eat Quiche, provides a good example of self-expression in first language use. I quote:

> Real Men do not talk like Alexander Haig. When a simple yes or no answer is required, you'll get a simple yes or no, and not one of these:
>
> > "Well, according to our latest reports, at this point in time, within the usual parameters, allowing for the normal fluctuations and unpredictable variables--and subject to a reassessment in a different time frame--answer-wise, I'd have to respond to your query with a definite guarded affirmative: based on present information, the odds are good that I had quiche for dinner last night."
>
> Among Real Men, this is called Bullshit.

Although this may be taken as an example of language constrained by political demands, it certainly reflects self-expression and reveals personality. Would you guess that Mayor Koch of New York City said it?

Coupland (1984) speaks of the need for positive, competent, self-presentation. First language interference and sociolinguistic avoidance in L_2 pronunciation probably result from the desire for positive self-presentation. American high school boys may avoid pronouncing the front-rounded vowel /ü/ in French because they don't like the image of pursed lips. Japanese students may resist pronouncing /θ/ because they don't like to stick their tongues out. They also resist initial /r/ and /w/ because of the lip rounding required. Yasushi Sekiya (personal communication) reports that Japanese students think the /ae/ vowel sounds silly, so they substitute an /a/ like sound. In other words, aesthetic considerations that are culturally-based affect the degree and presence of interference. There doesn't seem to be much serious research on this topic, but there should be.

I hope to have demonstrated by these data and anecdotes that transfer is not uniquely a psycholinguistic process of interlingual overgeneralization. Sometimes, it does not involve overgeneralization at all. In those cases, it may be powerfully motivated by some of the same social psychological factors that operate in L_1 speech shifts. The second issue I'd like to discuss is:

(2) Does attention to speech underlie all style shifting?

Labov (1969) claims that attention to speech underlies all style shifting. This notion has been adopted by Dickerson (1974) and Tarone (1979, 1982, 1984) and extended to the L_2 context. I have suggested (Beebe, 1982), however, that attention to speech does not underlie all style shifting and that we should look for the common social psychological basis of speech shifts.

Three major reservations can be raised about (1) the claim that attention to speech underlies all style shifting and (2) the claim that higher attention to speech leads to more prestige variants in L_1 formal style and more correct variants in L_2 formal style.

The first reservation is: Attention to speech is sometimes negatively Correlated with standardness or correctness. Attention to speech was negatively correlated with correctness in the data from the Thai study (Beebe, 1980) previously mentioned. The Thais transferred socially marked trilled R's from Tahi when speaking English into what Labov calls the formal listing style. The higher rate of interference on initial R led to lower accuracy levels under conditions of attention focussed on speech. The Kiel project provided similar data. Burmeister and Ufert (1980) showed that one child had greater L_1 German interference on English verb phrase negation in a formal elicited context than in spontaneous conversation. It seems that greater attention to speech led to lower correctness. In this case, it was not, as in my Thai study, a case of a socially marked rule in the native language being the exception. We could not, as in my Thai sutdy, a case of a socially marked rule in the native language being the exception. We could not therefore say that high attention leads to low correctness (that is, the native language becomes the superordinate norm) only when the rule in the native language is socially marked. NL may permeate the formal, elicited style when not socially marked. It seems to be the case that Dickerson (1974) was not totally accurate in claiming that higher attention will lead to higher correctness. Higher attention, as Tarone and I have suggested, can actually lead to either higher or lower correctness, with either the native language or the target language permeating the interlanguage.

The second reservation I have about Labov's claim is the following: Style can be manifested in speech shifts that do not fall along the standardness or correctness dimensions. Shifts have been found in amount of talk, degree of elaboration, speech rate, duration, vocal intensity, pause and utterance length, stress, pitch, intonation, content expressed, and even complete code switches. In my study of bilingual Puerto Rican children in the New York area (Beebe, 1980b), I found that the third graders shifted their amount of talk according to the ethnicity of the interviewer. They used a significantly higher number or T-units with a monolingual Anglo interviewer than with an English-dominant Hispanic interviewer. Amount of talk might be related to attention to speech (it is difficult to say), but it is not measurable on a standardness or a correctness scale. Still, it seems to be within the realm of stylistic choice. Webb (1970) found speech rates shifted according to the rates of the interviewer's speech. Earlier research by Ray and Webb (1966) showed that John F. Kennedy varied the length of his response to reporters at press conferences according to the length of their questions. Again, length is not a matter of standardness or correctness, though it is a matter of style. Lieberman (1967) found that babies shifted pitch between parents, using lower frequency babbling with their fathers than with their mothers (gòò-goo with Daddy and góo-góo with Mommy).

The third reservation I have is that: Attention to speech is inadequate as an explanation for style shifting in most situations. It can be causally unrelated to style shifting in either experimental or naturalistic situations. Several groups of recent studies illustrate style shifting, but do not appear to involve attention as a causal variable. One group of studies discusses style shifts when interlocutor ethnicity is varied--possibly, but not

necessarily involving attention to speech as an underlying causal variable. Examples of this group include Ervin-Tripp (1968) and Beebe (1977, 1980b). If the psychological variable, attention to speech, is involved, we must still hypothesize that it is less important than social psychological variables in the interaction, such as feelings of ethnic identity and solidarity with one's ingroup.

A second group of recent studies has helped convince me that attention to speech is frequently not the causal variable, and not even the most salient variable, in style shifting. These studies involve style shifts in response to verbal threat to ethnic identity. Bourhis and Giles (1977) conducted the first one on native English-speaking Welsh subjects in south Wales. The subjects were learning Welsh, the language of their ingroup, as a second language. They were interviewed in English. As an initial neutral question, they were asked to give their impressions of the various language learning techniques they had been exposed to. Then they were asked an ethnically threatening question where the experimenter said things like: "even in the boardrooms of . . . your own education departments it is being said that Welsh is dying, why can't you leave it alone?" The experimenter said Welsh had "one foot in the grave" and was "on the slippery slope of extinction." Then subjects were asked to give their opinion about the survival and status of Welsh. A crucial factor in Welsh ethnic identity had been attacked by a Standard RP English-speaking outsider. If Lasbov's view is applicable, we would expect to find a higher level of Standard RP accent in response to the language classroom techniques question, where attention would presumably be focussed on speech for the analysis. We would expect to find a stronger Welsh accent in response to the ethnically threatening question since, presumably, Labov would argue that attention is

diverted away from speech by such an emotionally-based question. This was exactly what happened, but with only half the subjects. The opposite occurred with the other half. Those who had integrative motivation for learning Welsh (i.e., wanted "to become more familiar with their cultural heritage as national group members") increased their Welsh accents in English in response to the threatening question. Those who had instrumental motivation (ile., were trying "to further their immediate individual career prospects") decreased their Welsh accents when asked the ethnically threatening question.

In sum, I hope to have demonstrated that Labov's definition of style shifing does not hold up. Although his methodology is highly effective in eliciting a style shift, we cannot say that attention to speech is the principle underlying all style shifting or that high attention always leads to high correctness. If Labov's model is not adequate to explain all style shifting, how does Giles' proposed Speech Accommodation Theory fare?

The third issue:

(3) Is Giles' Speech Accommodation Theory (1979) adequate to explain all purposeful style shifting?

Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) is described as a "model of speech diversity" (Giles & Smith, 1979, p. 46). It is a social psychological perspective on speech shifts, frequently presented as an alternative to the sociolinguistic perspective on style shifting (Giles, 1979; Giles, undated, p. 105; Giles & Smith, 1979, p. 45). The essence of the argument for the alternative social psychological approach is that sociolinguistics is basically correlational, not explanatory. It tells us when and how people vary their speech, but it does not say why. Giles repeatedly claims that sociolinguists treat the speaker as a "sociolinguistic automaton," focussing only on norms and rules (Giles

& Smith, 1979, p. 46; Giles, undated, p. 105). He consistently advocates that speakers' moods, feelings, motives, and loyalties be considered central to their linguistic behavior.

Thus, the SAT view of stylistic variation appears to be a very broad one, incorporating the knowledge of sociolinguistics and the social psychology of language. However, SAT is actually a model of speech diversity in relation to the audience or reference group. Since most speech occurs in the physical presence of at least one listener, and virtually all speech, even that uttered in an empty room, can be analyzed in terms of intended audience, Speech Accommodation Theory appears to be a general model of all style shifting. Nevertheless, it is not. Giles acknowledges this (undated, p. 105). Platt (1977) makes the point that some style shifts which could be labelled as convergence or divergence might be more fruitfully viewed in other ways. In a recent paper (Beebe & Giles, 1984), Giles also concedes this point.

In the first section of this paper, I argued that self-expression, conforming to norms, and negotiation, as well as accommodation, are powerful social psychological functions of language variation (in general) and interference in second languages (in particular). (See Beebe & Giles, 1984; Beebe, 1983.) Thus, I am taking the position that an adequate theory of variation in general (or style shifting in second languages in particular) must include a broad complex of social psychological factors.

Beebe (1982) claimed that some variation must be termed "extravergence" in that it does not seem to consist of a move toward or away from the listener, on the psychological or the descriptive linguistic level. Some Asians in New York (Beebe, unpublished data) seldom pronounce an American /r/ in Native American fashion. They use too much retroflexion, not enough retroflexion,

or too little lip rounding. They flap it, trill it, drop it, or give it excessive friction. In the case of the Thais, whose /r/'s I have studied extensively, there are no NL correlated to the sounds they produce. The same seems to be true of many variants produced by Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, and Indonesian subjects. Approximations are well documented in the literature (Nemser, 1971; Johansson, 1973). What has not been discussed in any detail, however, is where they fit into a speech accommodation model. When used in interactions with native speakers, are these variants convergence in that they "approximate" TL sounds? Are they divergence in that they do not conform to TL norms? Are they convergence toward NL norms if they retain some influence from NL? Or are they divergence from NL norms? We would need a chart of phonetic distance to decide this. Perhps with vowels, it would be easy to decide on distance. But phonetic distance for consonants is more problematic. Differences in distinctive features could be counted, but a new scale of distinctive, <u>fine phonetic</u> features would have to be invented to describe them, and the problem would be determining which is more non-native, friction or flapping, excessive retroflexion or deficient retroflexion. It's likely that such a system would beg the question of convergence versus divergence. In my view, this variation is best described as "extravergence" since it consists of variants "outside" the system of convergence and divergence.

Thus, I have claimed that while both are extremely valuable, neither Labov's nor Giles' models adequately describe or explain the variation in interlanguage. As both mentors have themselves done, we must become increasingly broad and interdisciplinary in our analysis if we are to find the "True Truth." In conclusion, the insights of L_1 theories have enriched our knowledge of SLA, but in the final analysis, they have not given us all the answers.

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